

Department of Veterans Affairs 2006 Environmental Excellence Award Nomination



NOMINEE:

**William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital
2500 Overlook Terrace
Madison, WI 53705
Station #607**

AWARD CATEGORY:

Recycling

SPECIFIC NOMINATION:

**Innovative Recycling Program at
Wm. S. Middleton VAMC**

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Summary of Recycling Efforts:

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital is a tertiary care research facility that is affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In response to environmental and economic concerns that arose as a result of increasing volumes of solid waste generated, the facility drafted a waste management policy that directly addressed the issue. This policy was embraced by the staff at the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, revealing their dedication to environmental stewardship through increasing the volumes and variety of materials recycled by the facility. This dedication has resulted in the recycling of 505,285 pounds of solid waste in Fiscal Year 2005 (FY05) compared to 276,493 lbs. in FY99 an increase of 228,792 lbs. of materials recycled per year. FY05 was no exception to this trend with the facility increasing the amount of materials recycled by a total of 27,598 lbs. or 2.6%, from FY04. In FY05 the facility was able to increase the percent of total solid waste recycled to an all time high of 44.6%. Increasing the amount of materials recycled by the medical center not only reduces total solid waste disposal costs but also generates revenue that can be used to support recycling efforts and other environmental compliance programs. Recycling solid waste reduces the immense burden on landfills and reduces the consumption of raw natural resources.

The William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital has been praised by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) for its highly effective and continually improving recycling program. The facility has been asked to host a statewide educational recycling workshop for the WDNR to showcase its collection and management of recyclable products. The workshop will be presented in October 2006.

Several methods of recycling collection and promotion are employed by the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital. These methods include source segregation, education, reusable materials, and waste reduction.

Innovative Approaches, Techniques, and Technologies:

One approach utilized by the facility to maximize recycling efforts is source segregation at the point of waste generation of recyclables and materials bound for final disposal. This involves the proper characterization of accepted recyclable materials. Hospital employees are trained that blue receptacles are for recyclable materials and clear bag receptacles are for waste disposal. In order to make this process as easy as possible the facility supplies a blue recycling receptacle for each clear bag solid waste receptacle in administrative and office areas. Several recycling carts, which are discussed later, are also placed on each floor of the hospital to facilitate the collection of recyclables. This method increases access to blue recycling receptacles and in turn reduces the risk of an employee misclassifying recyclables as waste. This employee support and encouragement helps to divert recyclable materials from the clear bag receptacle to the recycling container. A key component to making source segregation work effectively is educating and training the administrative, engineering, clinical, and environmental services staff as to what materials can be reused or recycled. This training takes place during new

employee orientation and reinforced during environmental rounds when employees are on the job. Education of the staff has proven very effective in the source segregation process. In fact, employees take it so seriously, that if they see an item in the clear bag receptacle that is recyclable they have been known to leave notes in offices reminding the occupant of what materials should be placed in a recycling bin. All the training and education that takes place contributes to an overall environmental conscience of the entire staff facility wide.

One innovative device used to increase the amount of recyclable materials collected at the facility is a cart that has collection bins for five different recyclable materials. The carts are equipped to accept plastic bottles, aluminum cans, newspapers, magazines and glass. Recycle bin carts themselves have been assembled in-house and are a product of resource recovery as they are constructed from old bedside tables from the hospital wards. Plastics bottles go in the bin to the left; aluminum cans go in the bin to the right; glass goes in the sharps safe container on the top of the cart; magazines (glossy paper) goes in the drawer below the glass collection bin and finally newspaper goes in the larger drawer below the magazine collection. These carts have been proven to be a very successful method of collecting recyclables from employee areas. See pictures of cart in Figures 1, and 2 below.

Figure 1: Recyclable Materials Collection Cart (Front View)



Figure 2: Recyclable Materials Collection Cart (Front View Close-up)



Project Cost Effectiveness:

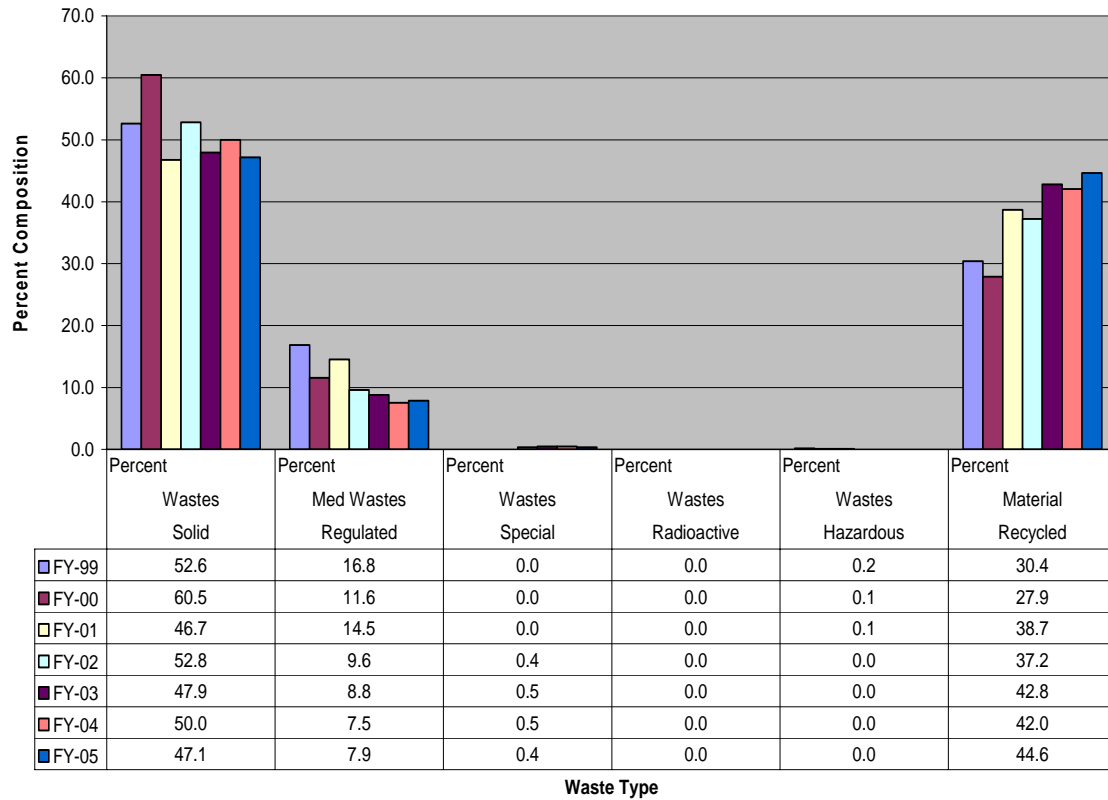
These dollar figures are based on the cost avoidance of land disposal for solid waste per pound and per pull rates of the contracted solid waste hauler. Therefore, in FY05 the facility avoided costs of \$16,674.00 on poundage diverted from landfill and \$3,622.00 on decreased container pulls per annum. The recycling efforts in FY05 saved the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital \$20,296, not counting the value of the sales of the recycled material. This can be attributed to the continued efforts of hospital staff and environmental services towards proper source segregation, recycling, and utilization of reusable products.

Performance Measures:

The performance improvement indicator utilized by the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital is to continue to sustain a recycling program that can financially support it and other environmental compliance projects. Each year the facility conducts market research into adding new waste streams into the recycling program to reflect the facility's continued pursuit of environmental excellence. Actual percentages of solid waste composition for FY05 can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Raw Solid Waste Data FY-99 through FY-05

Waste Composition Review



Concurrence:

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Nathan L. Geraths

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